

Policies and Procedures for
SENIOR CENTER CERTIFICATION
[October 2006]

WHY APPLY?

1. Certification enhances a center's professionalism, provides accountability, assures quality, improves credibility, markets the organization, identifies excellence, provides a snapshot of the organization, and promotes consistency/uniform standards.
2. The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) links funding to the level of certification.
3. Centers will receive a certificate of recognition from the Division of Aging and Adult Services identifying them as viable, fundable, and qualified providers of services within the community.
4. Centers gain the right to describe themselves as state-certified Centers of Merit or Centers of Excellence in their literature, grant applications, and marketing materials.
5. Certification eliminates the need for HCCBG Standards monitoring for Senior Center Operations funding.
6. Certified centers are recognized on the Division's website, which is often consulted by people in other states when researching places to move in North Carolina.

OTHER CERTIFICATION AND ACCREDITATION

Centers with a current National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) accreditation will automatically qualify as Centers of Excellence. They can apply for their certification by supplying proof of accreditation to the Division. The NISC National Accreditation is for 5 years and will be recognized by the Division for this period of time.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. DAAS/CARES provide annual certification workshops to acquaint centers with the certification process. The center director (preferably) or at least one member of the team completing the tool **must** attend this training prior to submitting the SCOPE tool. The center must submit the SCOPE tool for initial certification within three years of the training. If the person who received training leaves employment before the center submits the SCOPE, an alternate plan must be discussed with the Division.
2. Copies of the 1-page initial application, SCOPE self-assessment tool, and other important documents can be downloaded from the Division's website or requested directly from the Division.
3. The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is an important partner in the certification process, both to the senior center and DAAS. The AAA can assist with problem

areas and offer other help to the senior center. An AAA representative's signature is required on the cover sheet of the SCOPE tool before it is submitted to DAAS. This signature verifies that the representative is familiar with the senior center's completed SCOPE tool and documentation and feels that the center has no outstanding issues to be resolved. The Division will not accept the SCOPE tool or proceed with the site visit without this signature. For these reasons, senior centers should work closely with the AAA representative during the certification process. Specific steps include:

- (a) notifying the AAA when the center makes the decision to apply for certification
 - (b) including a representative from the AAA on the certification planning team
 - (c) keeping the AAA apprised of progress on a regular basis
 - (d) at least 30 days before the SCOPE is due to DAAS, submitting the completed SCOPE to the AAA representative and having documentation completed and ready for review.
4. Centers should develop a self-evaluation/certification team that includes board members, consumers, and community members—especially members of the planning group for the senior center—along with paid and volunteer senior center staff members and the AAA representative. This team should begin work on the SCOPE Tool. The date listed on the cover sheet of the SCOPE tool determines what constitutes the previous year or three years for questions where the number of activities within a certain timeframe is counted.
5. Beginning in July 2006, centers that wish to be certified or re-certified in time to receive any additional senior center funding that may be allocated for the next fiscal year must submit the 1-page application for certification to the Division by July 1. On the application you must specify a two-week period during which you would like to have the site team visit. Submitting an application for certification does not obligate you to having a site visit. You may cancel your application, but you may not resubmit it until the following fiscal year.

Site visits for new certifications will take place between September 1 and May 31.

There will be no certification or re-certification visits scheduled between December 10-January 9 and June 15-July 15.

6. Upon receipt of the 1-page application, the Division will contact the Center director to schedule a date for the submission of the SCOPE Tool and set a date for a site visit. In planning your work on the SCOPE tool, you should keep in mind two important deadlines:

- (1) Your completed SCOPE tool is due at the Division *one month* before the first day of the two-week period you specify.

(2) Your completed SCOPE tool and documentation should be ready for review by the AAA representative *two months* before the first day of the two-week period you specify.

Division staff members will try to schedule your site visit during the two-week period you specify and will negotiate another date if necessary. **Please remember that the Division needs one month to circulate your SCOPE tool for review.**

Here is a sample time line:

Senior center's plan for certification

July 1, 2006	Submit 1-page application for certification, requested site visit dates, February 16-27, 2007 (Site visit scheduled for February 18 by the Division.)
December 16, 2006	SCOPE to AAA and documentation ready for AAA review
January 16, 2007	SCOPE to Division of Aging and Adult Services
February 18, 2007	Site visit by the certification team

7. The Division will assemble a site review team made up of a DAAS representative, an AAA representative, a CARES representative, two center directors from outside of the applicant's region (with an effort to have a one of them be from a certified center), and the Senior Tar Heel delegate from the applicant's county. The certification process is an "open-book test." Do not submit your SCOPE tool until you feel reasonably sure (and your AAA representative agrees) that you meet all of the criteria for at least Center of Merit. All standards in each section of the SCOPE Tool must be met at the level of either the Center of Merit or Center of Excellence to gain certification or recertification.

8. Once the senior center submits the SCOPE tool, a representative from the Division or CARES will make a preliminary review. If it is determined during these individual reviews that the Center does not seem to meet the minimum standard for certification, the representative will contact the center at least 10 days before the scheduled site visit and try to resolve the issue by telephone or e-mail. If the problem cannot be quickly resolved, the Division may postpone the site visit until it becomes clear that the center can likely meet the requirements of Merit.

9. For centers applying for recertification, if the original certification expires before the center is recertified, any publication of certification status must include the dates of the certification period and the certification status will be removed from the DAAS Senior Center Directory. Moreover, the center's funding may be affected for the next fiscal year. For administrative reasons the Division may schedule your site visit after your certification expires. If this occurs your certification will be extended.

10. Following the site review visit, which is usually a one-day visit, the team will give its recommendation for certification to the Division which will make the final determination. Within four weeks of the site visit the Division will send the center a

certificate of Merit or Excellence along with a letter outlining the findings of the site visit. If the site visit is held and the center is not certified, it must wait one year to reapply.

THE CRITERIA

1. The combined SCOPE Tool and Scoring Guide: The SCOPE Tool and the Scoring Guide [in the gray areas] are combined into one document.
2. Centers must pass [meet] **ALL** sections at the level of Merit to receive certification.
3. For questions where the number of activities within a certain timeframe is counted, the date listed on the cover sheet of the SCOPE tool determines what constitutes the previous year or three years.
4. Centers are certified for a period of three years. A center that is certified as a Center of Merit may not apply for Center of Excellence until the end of the three year certification period of the main center.

APPEALS

PROCESS:

1. A senior center wishing to appeal an award decision must submit a written request for a hearing to the Division Section Chief, Service Operations Section, within ten (10) days of the award decision [date of report]. The hearing will be held at the Division of Aging and Adult Services office in Raleigh.
2. Within ten (10) days of receiving the request for an appeal, the Division will notify the senior center director/manager via certified mail of the following:
 - a. the location, date, and time of hearing
 - b. procedural issues to be heard
 - c. process by which the appeal will be heard and a decision rendered.
3. The senior center director/manager may bring up to two other people to the appeals hearing. One of these people may be the Area Agency Administrator for the region in which the center is located.
4. The Division reserves the right to have present at the hearing at least two representatives of the site review team and the Division attorney, if necessary.
5. Within ten (10) days of the hearing, the Division shall make a decision and inform the senior center via certified mail of the decision. This decision is binding.

SATELLITES

1. The definition of a Satellite Senior Center for the certification process is contained in DOA Administrative Letter No. 01-5, April 24, 2001: "Clarifications Regarding Senior Center Certification; Senior Center Definitions. . . .")

A satellite senior center is an extension of a MPSC and must be opened at least three days per week for a minimum of 24 hours and must be linked

administratively to a multi-purpose senior center. Satellites must make use of appropriate facilities for its programs. Such facilities must be designed, located, constructed or renovated and equipped so as to promote effective access to and operation of its program and to provide for the health, safety and comfort of participants, staff and public. Facilities may be free standing or located in a larger facility with an area designated for senior center programming during specified hours.

It must be staffed by a trained and paid senior center manager who is capable of implementing programs during the hours that the satellite center is in operation. The manager must be available during the hours of operation of the satellite center and must be under the supervision of the MPSC Director. This position may not be made up of several part-time positions. The manager must have a written job description. Each employee must attend a minimum of eight hours of training on an annual basis, and must have received training in **at least one** of the following topics each year: first aid; emergency response; CPR; death and dying; Alzheimer's disease or dementia; blood-borne pathogens; HIV/AIDS; aging-related topics; management and supervision; or training specific to job responsibility (e.g., new computer software).

The center must offer at least two ongoing outreach activities, two annual events and five programs and/or activities on a weekly basis, not to include nutrition (if a nutrition program is offered, it is not to be included as one of the five programs and/or activities). There must be a written plan for transportation of participants. A list of activities and the hours they are offered must be posted within the facility. A minimum of two volunteers over the age of 60 must be utilized, with a written plan in place describing the duties of the volunteer. A representative from the satellite center over 60 years of age must be on the board or advisory committee of the MPSC in an ex-officio position. At least 80 percent of the facility space must be used for satellite center activities, and the remaining 20 percent may be used for office space.

2. When a center applying for certification includes their satellite(s) as a part of the application packet, only the 'main' center will receive extra funding. The satellite(s) listed in the Division's directory will continue to receive the funding amount awarded to uncertified centers. In order for a satellite to receive the additional funding it must apply for certification as a separate entity, but if it has been included in the application of the main center it cannot apply until after the 3-year certification period of the main center. Satellite space and programs may not account for more than 25% of the total required for certification.

CERTIFICATION DATES

A center's certification date begins on the first day of the month following the certification site review visit. However, if the site visit occurs in June, the certification will be dated the last day of June following the visit rather than July 1. This would assure that the center would receive funding for the next fiscal year, which would begin on July 1.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS FOR CENTERS

Exception may be made to the 4,000 square foot requirement listed in the SCOPE Tool scoring section on a case-by-case basis, after a request for a waiver has been presented. In allowing an exception, however, the square footage cannot drop below 3,000. Such exceptions might be granted if the building is a historic site and not permitted to have additional space attached; if the program is very strong otherwise and space is the only criterion not met; if the main building is less than 4,000 square feet, but there are satellites included as a part of the application whose square footage can be used to make up the difference. Satellite space and programs may not account for more than 25% of the total required for certification. Auxiliary facilities such as bathrooms and storage that are used primarily by center participants count in the square footage, while such facilities that are used only or primarily by staff do not. Kitchens and nutrition facilities may be included if they are also used for center activities. In cases where the satellite is used to make up the square footage requirement, the satellite cannot become a certified center.

FUNDING

Whenever possible, certified centers will receive extra shares of funding from the Senior Center General Purpose allocation. The amount of each share will be determined annually by the Division based on the amount of funding available and number of certified centers. This means that the amount of funding will most likely change from year to year.

EXPECTATIONS FOR CERTIFIED CENTER DIRECTOR/MANAGERS

Directors/managers of certified centers are expected to provide mentorship to other centers that are attempting certification, if asked. They are also expected to share documentation with other centers and should be willing to volunteer to serve on site review teams.